

Customs Modernization

July 2002 Status Update for Oversight Agencies

"It is time for a lasting partnership between Customs and Industry to ensure both security for our Nation, and the smooth flow of commerce across our borders."

*Doug Browning
Deputy Commissioner
U.S. Customs Service*

Trade Community Role is Key in Customs Modernization

With the high demands of global trade and emerging security threats to our nation, Customs recognizes the importance of a collaborative effort between the government, trade, and support contractors in building the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE), the first modernization initiative.

The Trade Support Network (TSN) was established in 1994 as the primary vehicle through which the trade communicates its user requirements for the newly developed ACE. At a recent conference held June 4-6, over 120 members of the trade community came together with Customs personnel to discuss the status of the Modernization Program.

The TSN currently consists of eight committees, formed to ensure key user requirements are being implemented in the design of ACE. The TSN has submitted over 130

user requirements to date and are actively involved in all phases of ACE development.

Mr. Browning, Deputy Commissioner of U.S. Customs, addressed the TSN Conference and acknowledged the important role the TSN plays in the Customs ACE modernization program, stating that "[Trade] involvement as a modernization stakeholder and partner is critical."

The TSN has been working with Customs and together they have achieved great momentum in establishing an enhanced trade system that is designed and implemented in a timely manner. To accomplish this goal, the TSN committees are focused on specific ACE component requirements.

One of the highlights of the conference was the announcement of three new committees: the TSN Legal/ Policy, TSN Export, and Transition Committees. The TSN created these committees to address emerging issues in the fluid modernization environment. Customs has drafted operational, financial and legal policies and has asked the TSN to share its thoughts through the three new committees.

Another highlight from the conference was the Deputy Commissioner's discussion on the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT). Under C-TPAT, companies have committed to improving the security of their shipments and the supply chain. In return, Customs will give them faster processing at the border. C-TPAT is an integral part of ACE that applies to all commercial shipments, at all ports of entry. Browning said, "The success of C-TPAT and other initiatives depend on the support of every segment of the trade community."

Browning emphasized that Customs needs to revolutionize the way it does business with the trade. "Our common goal is to implement a system that helps us achieve our trade and border protection objectives, which will promote our nation's security while expediting the flow of commerce across our borders," said Browning.

Application Deadline Extended

Customs plans to conduct an operational test as indicated in the May 1, 2002 Federal Register Notice. This test will allow selected importers and authorized parties to participate in identifying capabilities to be used in the Web-based Account Portal that will be launched in early 2003. The application deadline has been extended to August 1, 2002 to establish the initial 40 importers to participate in the test.

Customs Modernization Office
703-440-3000 • cmo@customs.treas.gov
www.customs.gov/modernization



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